

Churches and Religion

2.

Romanian

175
195
[642]

church). The Romanian church has become independent from this Patriarchy only as a result of a long and complex process which began when the independent Romanian State came into being in 1859 as "the United Romanian Principalities." The first constitution of the kingdom of Romania of 1866 stated (Article 21) that "the Romanian Orthodox Church is independent." But the recognition of its autocephaly by the Patriarchy of Constantinople was declared only in 1885. Nevertheless, the Romanian Church has continued to maintain its unity with the ecumenical church of the East. This relation was, however, confined to the purely religious aspect. The Romanian church considered to be its duty to consult Constantinople Patriarchy on difficult questions of dogmas, canons, and cults whenever it was necessary.

Thus, it may be observed that the independence of the Romanian church was a consequence of the political independence of the Romanian State. The independence of the church signified the achievements of the sovereignty of the Romanian people and the church organization rendered important help and support to the incipient state.

• [793]

The Romanian clergy took part in the government administration and in political life. The clergymen could be elected to the parliaments and seats in some important governmental bodies were reserved to it. This was rather a constitution of the established tradition because in the past the representatives of the clergy had always been counsellors of the "domnitor" (the ruler) and members of the "Sfatul Tarii" (country's Assembly).

Churches and Religion

Romania

6.

659 not extend beyond the frontiers of the country and, vice versa, no foreign church may have jurisdictional powers over any denomination in Romania. Moreover, any material support granted and accepted from outside must be communicated to the Romanian Government.

793 The clergymen, the heads of the religious organizations and their officers must be Romanian citizens or they must apply for naturalization. A foreign citizen may be admitted only by special authorization and specifically if otherwise the existence and the functioning of a religious community would be imperilled.

[678] As in the case of the Orthodox Church, the heads of all religious denominations and their clergymen are triable for canon and political offenses by the High Court of Cassation and Justice (not by ordinary courts). However, the disciplinary cases in church matters shall be tried by their own Synods.

The organizations of the historical churches (infra) are legal entities.

794 The religious denominations freely administer their assets as well as establish and manage as many charitable and educational institutions as they wish or need. The same is true of schools for preparation of the clergy. These, however, must communicate to the Ministry of Religious Affairs concerning their curricula.

[871] Each church has the right to give religious instruction to their youth of the given denominations in either public or private schools, as well as to men on active service.

8

Churches and Religion

Romania

9.

659
794

Besides their own revenues, the Churches were entitled to ask for contribution from their parishioners to cover the expenses of maintenance. In case of need the State may supply the amounts required for specified needs; in this case it reserved the right to verify that they are lawfully used.

[798]

Articles 43 and 44 provided that since the Constitution guaranteed to all citizens the freedom of religion and conscience every individual has the right to belong to any religious denomination he desires, as well as to change his religion after he reaches the age of 18 years.

659

Up to the end of World War II the Law No. 54 was amended several times.

[793]

The first amendment was caused by the fact that some sects carried on a propaganda which was considered to affect the public order. Thus by Decree No. 2752 of August 3, 1929 the Government introduced more severe penalties for clergymen who induced their flock to disobey the laws of the country.

798
659

Moreover, the decree allowed for the same reasons to withdraw from a religious association the authorization to function. The same fact induced the Government to make further a distinction among the religious associations which were not enumerated as historical in the Law No. 54 of 1928.

The Order (Decizune) No. 114, 119 of 1933 of the Minister of Religious Affairs made a distinction between the permitted religious associations and those forbidden on the grounds of

Churches and Religion

Romania

10.

798 being dangerous to public order. The list of the latter was
659 later expanded or reduced according to the evolution of the
political concept of "public order". During World War II, for
instance, several rites of the Russian Orthodox Church were
forbidden because they became mere tools for the policy of
Soviet propaganda.

The second amendment was made by Decree No. 3286
of October 2, 1940, promulgated by the rightist (Iron Guard)
Government. By this act all religious orders and congregations
not duly permitted to function at the time of enactment of the
Law No. 54 of 1928 were forbidden. The primary purpose of
these provisions was to outlaw the Jewish religion because the
provisions of the Law No. 54 of 1928 could be interpreted as
not providing for its definite status (see supra).

[793] In addition, this act restated the requirement of
Romanian citizenship for clergymen of all denominations and
fixed a certain period of time within which the clergymen had
either to comply with this rule or leave the country.

Finally, all religious associations were obliged to
register with the Ministry of Religious Affairs which had the
right to refuse the registration of any one of these bodies.

A further amendment by Decree-Law No. 711 of April 21,
1941, forbade the admittance to other denominations of people
of Jewish religion.

The Law No. 927 of December 30, 1942, changed the
procedure for establishment of religious associations provided
for in Article 24 of the Law No. 54 of 1928. The authorization

Churches and Religion

Romania

12.

795
659 within the new frontiers, there were several orthodox churches governed by various hierarchical authorities, in addition to the Romanian Orthodox Church of the Old Kingdom. This was done by Law No. 1402 of May 6, 1925. It provided not only for the organization and procedure but it also stated that, since the [162] Romanian Orthodox Church is the religion of the great majority of the Romanian people (72.6 percent, according to returns of the census of 1930, in 1930), it is considered, in comparison with the other religions of the country, as the dominant religion. In its relations with the other Orthodox churches, it was declared autocephalous, that is, administratively independent.

By this law the role of the Romanian Orthodox Church as a national church has been reiterated. The salaries of the clergy were paid by the State out of budgetary appropriations.

As the Law of 1925 was silent on this point, the dioceses of the Orthodox Church were granted the status of legal entities by a separate law of May 3, 1926.

• 793
659 By the Law No. 1002 of May 4, 1926, Article 21 of the Law of 1925 was amended defining the status of the Orthodox clergy. Since they were paid by the Treasury there was a question as to whether the clergymen were civil employees.

The amendment clearly stated that clergymen enjoy all the rights and benefits of public servants only as far as the pay is concerned. In all other respects (appointment, promotion, discipline, etc) they remained under the rules of church law and the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical authorities.

Churches and Religion

Romania

13.

- 793 They were subject to church law and to disciplinary authority
659 of the Synod. At the same time, the amendment provided that
the State shall pay, besides the salaries, all the other administrative expenses of the Orthodox church.

3. The Status of the Roman Catholic Church

- 795 There are two jurisdictions within the Roman Catholic Church in Romania: the Roman Catholics in the strict sense and the so-called Greek Catholics or Uniates. — Both are under the supreme authority of the Holy See and the Uniates are considered a rite within the Roman Catholic Church. It is proper, therefore, to begin the study with the status of the Roman Catholic Church in general.

The Catholic Church appeared for the first time in the Romanian provinces (Moldavia and Wallachia) toward the end of the 14th century and, in fact, it did not have any kind of diocesan organization before the beginning of the 17th century. During this time its organization consisted merely of several Catholic missions. From 1611 until 1919, the Catholic Church was organized into two dioceses: one for Moldavia with a bishop in Iassy and another for Wallachia governed by an archbishop in Bucharest who was also the highest dignitary for Romania.

[162] After 1919, the Catholic population from the provinces incorporated after World War I merged with that of the Old Kingdom and, according to the census of 1930, made up a Catholic minority of 6.8 percent of the total Romanian population. The Catholic Church insisted upon recognition as a National Church and upon

Churches and Religion

Romania

794 The religious instruction ¹⁸ of Catholics in all kind of
659 schools, including government schools, is conducted according
871 to directives issued by the Catholic Bishop. The directives
are to be communicated also to the Ministry of Education.

The Bishop has the right to request the dismissal
of teachers of Catholic religion in public or private schools,
even where such teachers are appointed and paid by the Govern-
ment, if the Bishop considered the teacher unqualified for this
task.

[874]

Finally, the Catholic Church has the right to establish
all kinds of Divinity Schools for preparing the Catholic clergy.
The curriculum of those schools is established by the competent
Catholic Church authorities.

● 793
659

The Catholic bishops and their assistants, appointed
by the Vatican, must be Romanian citizens and are obliged to take
an oath of allegiance to the King, the Constitution and the laws
of the country. Those who are not citizens are allowed to apply
for citizenship within a reasonable period of time.

The appointment of the clergy is within the exclusive
jurisdiction of the Church authorities. However, an appointment
must be communicated, in advance, to the Ministry of Religious
Affairs.

Article 23, the last article of the Concordat, states
that "The two contracting parties reserve the right to denounce
this Concordat after notice has been served six months in advance."

659

An additional Protocol was signed on May 30, 1932
(Official Gazette No. 180 of August 3, 1932 And ratified by
Decree-Law No. 659 (Official Gazette No. 52 of March 2, 1940)
pertaining to the

Churches and Religion

Romania

19.

175
795

The Greek Catholic fraction was amalgamated into the hierarchy of the Roman Church and became simply a rite within that church. At the very beginning, this church was organized as a single diocese with the rank of a Bishopric but, later on, the number of dioceses was raised to three. Nevertheless, during a period of approximately 90 years from the time of the union, the Uniate bishops were supervised and controlled by Jesuit monks sent from Rome. In 1855, the Greek Catholic Church was raised to the rank of a Mitropoly and the Jesuitic control was withdrawn.

115
659

Until the Concordat of 1929, the status of this church was based mainly on the provisions of the Act of Union of 1698. Both the Constitution of 1923 and the Law No. 54 of 1928 granted it priority above all the other religious minorities. It has been reorganized since the conclusion of the Concordat and was given all rights and privileges of the Catholic Church. The highest dignitaries of the Greek Catholic Church were equally senators ex officio of the Romanian Parliament as were those of the Roman Catholic Church. The clergy has been paid by the State. For preparing its clergy the church was maintained three theological academies. The returns of the census of 1930 showed that 7.9 percent of the population of Romania belonged to the Greek Catholic faith.

[162]

Churches and Religion

Romania

22.

659 amendment; namely, by Law 62 of March 2, 1948. Its main provisions were as follows:

[421] All reorganized denominations were ordered to take detailed inventory of their assets and communicate it to the Ministry of Religious Affairs in order to enable the latter to exert an easier control over their material resources. Further, the denominations were obliged to hold religious services every time the Government so ordered.

• [793] The heads of the Churches, elected or appointed, shall be recognized only upon taking of an oath of allegiance to the newly established People's Republic. By this oath they promised not only to obey the laws, but also to enforce them, to compel their subordinates to obey them and defend the Republic against "any enemies from within or without."

[421] Finally, the Ministry of Religious Affairs was empowered to control and verify all assets and revenues of all kinds belonging to any church, as well as the use made of them.

It is clear that by this amendment the Government took quite a different attitude towards the church. Its existence is justified in the eyes of the government and protected only insofar as the church organizations enforce the law of the country and defend its political order. This amounts rather to bestowing executive and police powers upon the churches and to force upon them to practice political discriminations instead of religion.

There is a novel provision according to which the Government is entitled to control the use made by the churches of their

Churches and Religion

Romania

24.

order to be organized and to function, the religious denominations must be recognized and granted permission to do so by decree of the Presidium of the Great National Assembly upon proposal of the Cabinet. 659 798

"In well-founded cases, the recognition can be withdrawn in the same way" (Article 13).

Consequently, the existence of a religious denomination, including all its orders, congregations, etc., is left entirely at the discretion of the political authorities.

Only the recognized religious denominations and their local organizations possess the status of legal entities. Such status may be granted to their civil associations and endowments, pursuing religious aims, as well as their orders and congregations if they comply with all requirements provided by the Law for legal entities (Article 28).

The heads of the religious denominations as well as the dignitaries of their churches and the entire personnel must be Romanian-citizens and "enjoy fully the exercise of civil and political rights" (Article 20). No mention is made with regard to the situation or fate of those dignitaries who are not, or not as yet, citizens. 659 793

As to who has the full exercise of the civil rights is clearly defined by the Civil Law. But a different situation exists with regard to the political rights. Although these rights are well defined the statutory provisions, the final and only proof that a person enjoy the political rights is the fact that he has

Churches and Religion.

Romania

25.

659
793 ●

been registered in the electoral list in 1946 and that his name was still there subsequently. In other words, only those clergymen and officers of the church are admitted to serve their churches who came successfully through all purges practiced by the Communist Government since 1945. Since the beginning of 1949, the lists are checked annually and are kept by the local People's Soviets which enjoy almost unlimited administrative and political powers. So far these local soviets were not elected but were appointed by the Communist Party's machinery and it stands to reason that nobody is entered on the electoral lists who is not completely trusted by the Party. Other usual reasons to strip a citizen of his political rights are: "undemocratic attitudes", "People's foe", "traitor", etc. Therefore, the political capacity is no longer a status granted to every citizen by the Constitution which could be exceptionally taken away for great and precisely defined offenses against the State after due process in courts, but it may be taken away by the decision of the Communist Party alone. Moreover, Article 33 of the Decree No. 177 provides that a clergyman of a recognized church who shows an "anti-democratic attitude", may be deprived, totally or in part, of the right to draw salary.

The requirement of oath established by the Law No. 62 of 1948 is maintained also in the new law and every minister of religion or officer of any church must take it before the admission to this office.

5

Churches and Religion

Romania

26.

Article 25^b provides that:

"the Ministry of Religious Affairs shall suspend any decision, instruction or directive, as well as any order (of a church authority) having a church administrative, cultural, educational or a charitable character or pertaining to endowments if it is contrary to the status of the denomination, to the act of its establishment, to public security or public order or morals. The pastoral and circular letters shall be communicated in advance to the Ministry of Religious Affairs." (Italics supplied.)

659

793 •

671

The religious denominations and their endowments, associations, etc., must submit a full report on their financial situation for approval and verification by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The law provides that the salaries of clergymen and the officers of the church shall be paid by the State. But, in contrast to the Law No. 1002 of 1936, Article 34 of the Decree No. 177 suggests that these persons are on the same footing with other government employees in all respects. This article reads:

Article 34

Placing on the payroll of the clergymen and officers of the religious denominations shall be done according to the general rules.

The "general rules" of government employment referred to here (Code of Civil Service of 1946) makes clear that everybody who draws salary from the Government treasury enjoys all rights and has all of the duties of a governmental employee.

Several provisions deal with the disposal of property of parishes where a part of the parishioners decided to choose

659

425

[1. Law No. 61, Article 25, 1948 - Analyst]

Churches and Religion

Romania

33.

schools.

000

Neither the Decrees No. 175, 176 and 177 nor any other law or decree mention the religious instruction in any way. The officially approved curricula of secondary and higher educational institutions do not provide for religious instruction. Nowhere is mentioned the right of the church to supervise religious instruction in case it would be given in general schools.

659
871

The only kind of schools allowed to the church are the special divinity schools for the training of clergymen and auxiliary personnel. These schools are in all aspects, including that of the curriculum, under the supervision of the Ministries of Religious Affairs and of Education. The Ministry of Religious Affairs may, among other things, dismiss at any time the professors appointed by the church whenever it deems that "public order and the security of the State" so requires.

659
871
793 ●

Article 49 of the Decree No. 177 limited the number of Schools of Divinity of university rank in the whole country to: two for the Orthodox Church, one for the Catholic Church and one for all Protestant Churches. But a subsequent order of the Ministry of Religious Affairs reduced further the number of divinity and clerical schools of all denominations and did not mention the establishment of any Roman Catholic Divinity Schools. All of this shows the intention of the government to bar the opportunity for training of the ministers of religion.

It must also be mentioned that no general education may be given at the Divinity Schools. Notwithstanding according

Churches and Religion

Romania

34.

to the curricula approved by the government, an important place is given to three special subjects of "general education", viz., Constitution and law of the Romanian People's Republic, Russian language, and History of Russian Theology.

By the Order No. 42,898 (Official Gazette No. 226 of November 15, 1948) the curricula were approved for the divinity schools of the following denominations: Greek Orthodox, Protestant (including Evangelist, Reformed and Unitarian), Jewish, Baptist, Adventist and Moslems. No mention is made of any curricula for the Roman Catholic Divinity Schools. The same is true of the "Christian Church of Old Rite" but for a different reason (see infra).

3. Status of the Romanian Orthodox Church

No new general law on the Romanian Orthodox Church was enacted and it continues to be regulated by the provisions of the Law for the Organization and Unification of May 6, 1925, as amended, since 1947 (see infra). Yet, an interesting question seems to remain open; viz., is it still the dominant church in the State, e. g., the National Church or not? As it has been mentioned previously, the Organic Law of 1925 provided that, since the Greek Orthodox Creed is the religion of the majority of the Romanian people, the Romanian Orthodox Church is dominant in the country. The new amendments of the law of 1925 did not directly affect this provision. But this principle has been taken from the old Constitution of 1923 which, in Article 22, paragraph 4, specifically stressed its role as a

659
871
793●

659
795

659
795
642

Churches and Religion

Romania

44.

and any obligation toward the State including taxes and military service. In any event, those who settled abroad broke away from any administration connection with the Moscow hierarchy but did not join any other established Eastern Orthodox Church. Only a part of those remaining in Russia reunited with the official Russian Orthodox Church in the 1830's. These are the so-called "edinoverstsi."

795
563

However, those who settled in the Romanian Eastern provinces and their descendants continued their life in religious communities separately from the Romanian society and from the Russian Church. As they were opposed to any assimilation or unification with the Romanian Orthodox Church, they have been treated as a separate religious denomination. The religious tolerance has been granted by documentants several times.

This church succeeded in organizing closed religious communities in parishes, in building churches, establishing monasteries and in some sects even establishing a certain hierarchy. But the movement did not have its own Divinity Schools and many sects were not willing to train the priests in Romanian or Russian schools.

[793] •

After the enactment of the Law No. 54 of 1928, the dignitaries of the Church of the Old Rite prepared a Constitution and by-laws and submitted it to the Romanian Government for approval in order to become recognized as a denomination. Up until 1942 they repeatedly tried to get this recognition and thus transform a de facto tolerance into the de jure recognition. Because of political reasons and suspicions of disloyalty, this status has never been granted.

795
659

THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE 25

garian Kingdom, as by the Habsburgs for their purposes; but it has a very distinctive vitality of its own. 659

The Patriarch of the Rumanian Orthodox Church is a person of great importance in the State and was one of the Council of Regency during the present king's minority. He, the Metropolitans, the Bishops of the Orthodox Church and those of the Rumanian Uniate Church were Senators for life: so were the heads of other Churches having over 200,000 members.¹ 659 798

The village priest, *Popa*, plays a leading part in the life of the Orthodox community. There is great veneration of certain saints—especially the Blessed Virgin and the Saint of the parish—and their ikons. Many of the strongest traditions of the country people are those connected with the seasons, and the Church has christianized many of the old pagan customs. The funeral rites, in particular, only part of which are conducted by the priest, are full of strange symbolism. There is a widespread belief in vampires and other evil spirits and the need of exorcizing them. But though religious practice hovers upon the borderline between faith and superstition, the standard of personal morality among the peasantry is on the whole a high one; the family counts for a great deal and the honour of women is closely guarded. 771 [764]

¹ According to the 1938 census, 13,200,000 belonged to the Orthodox Church (Rumanians, Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgars and other Slavs); 2,628,813 were Roman Catholics (Latin Rite, mostly Magyars and Germans, 1,200,000; Greek Rite 1,426,313); 1,195,000 belonged to Protestant Churches (including 400,000 German Lutherans); 1,500,000 were Jews and 260,000 Mohammedans. There were 140,000 'others'. 162

26 THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE

- 793 The poor clergy are very active in politics and
661 public affairs generally. Their influence, and even
[212] more that of the bishops, has not infrequently been
abused to further private interests.¹ The majority
of the Rumanians are only semi-literate and depend
for their information and guidance on the priests.
- 871 Education has been the weak point of almost all the
Rumanian governments. But those Rumanians
whose parents have been able to give them a good
education have proved that this highly intelligent
and gifted people can achieve success in all fields of
science and the arts.

563 THE HUNGARIANS AND THE SZEKELYS. The Hun-
garians and Szekelys, most of whom came under
Rumanian rule after the Great War, live chiefly in
Transylvania and the western provinces of Greater
Rumania. The forefathers of the Szekelys were
brought to these territories by the Hungarian kings
and charged with the task of defending and securing
the Kingdom's frontiers. The Hungarian nobles and
Szekelys were two of the 'Three Ruling Nations'
of Transylvania.² They were supported and en-
couraged by their kin in Hungary proper, given
many privileges in the economic, political and
cultural spheres. Thanks to all this they were able

¹ One blatant example of this occurred about ten years
ago when a shepherd, who claimed to have 'visions' and
prophetic power was built up into a holy figure. The
simple peasants flocked to see and hear him, bringing
many gifts. The State railways organized special travel
facilities and this enriched many officials and members
of the clergy.

² The three 'united' or 'recognized nations' of Tran-
sylvania were the Hungarian nobility, the Szekelys and
the Saxons.

295 by imported boots and shoes, whilst socks and stockings bought at the local fairs are beginning to be preferred to the traditional method of bandaging the feet (see Appendix V).

WOOD.

312 THE most characteristic of the other local occupations are concerned with wood. Each peasant is allowed a certain amount of timber annually, the cutting of which is arranged by the Forestry Co-operative Society, but for every tree felled a new one has to be planted. Among the men of the village the making of wooden spoons; jugs and plates, often elaborately carved, is a favourite pursuit, though it is being threatened by cheap imported metal goods, so that in this, as in other ways, a rapid transition from medieval to modern conditions seems likely to occur in the near future.

THE GREEK CATHOLIC PRIEST.

793 ALTHOUGH primarily concerned with the spiritual welfare of his flock, the Greek Catholic (Uniate) priest in Corbu, as elsewhere in Roumania, is intimately bound up with the economic life of the community. Following the rule of the Eastern and Uniate Churches for their secular clergy with a cure of souls, the priest is married and depends to a considerable extent upon his land for his maintenance. He is often trusted with public and private business on behalf of the commune and its members. To him the peasants may bring their maize to be ground, their sunflower seeds to be crushed, their timber to be sawn and their cloth to be scoured. The water of the Bistricioara that runs past the priest's house is harnessed to provide power at Corbu for these operations, and from the services he thus renders to the villagers the priest gets part of his income.

IV. THE FUTURE

679 IT IS CLEAR from the foregoing account that Corbu is a mountain community that is rapidly approaching a crisis in its history. The old economic self-sufficiency is being undermined by the insidious influence of the journeyman, and the cheapness of the new wares that he is introducing will tend to increase the amount of leisure that the peasant already enjoys by releasing labour that he has hitherto expended on

SOVIETIZING THE BALKAN REGION

233

made for the Jews, the Orthodox Church dealt with other confessions in an irenic manner. 795

Rumania profited greatly if temporarily from its sponsorship of the Allied cause during World War I. Territories were assigned to it which had traditionally belonged to Bulgaria, Hungary, and Russia, presenting the government with a number of problems with which it had not previously been concerned. Transylvania, taken from Hungary, had a population divided almost equally between Roman Catholics and Protestants. The Russian Orthodox Church was predominant in Bessarabia, once deeded to the Czar by the West. The Rumanians dealt with the situation in a manner both intelligent and conciliatory. After the favored status of the Greek Orthodox Church had been defined, laws regulating the Confessions were passed during April, 1928. They carefully safeguarded the rights of the State and specifically forbade clergymen to embark on seas of foreign policy of their own charting, but acknowledged the right of the Churches to give religious instruction in public and private schools, and to conduct charitable enterprises. The government also signed a Concordat with the Holy See in 1927, with which the Vatican had no reason to be dissatisfied. 653
795
648

The Concordat conceded to the Catholic Church in all its branches, regular and secular, a large measure of legal protection. Stipulating that ecclesiastical properties must be used for the benefit of Rumanian citizens, and that the income therefrom was subject to audit by the government, it authorized the Church to create a "Sacred Diocesan Fund" to be administered by the Hierarchy. It also promised to add to the Fund if this proved to be inadequate to meet the expenses of necessity incurred by religious foundations. The Catholic clergy were asked to take an oath of allegiance to the King, to the Constitution, and to the laws of the nation. The government agreed not 659
648
794
793

659 to intervene to secure the appointment of clergymen, but re-
648 requested that it be informed in each instance. These laws were
794 modified under the rule of the Iron Front, in order to make
● 793 possible the persecution of the Jews. Christian communions ap-
pear, however, not to have been affected.

659 When a pro-Communist government was formed in Ru-
177 mania, the situation changed immediately and radically. The
671 laws adopted in 1928 were repealed by a decree of August 4,
1948. As usual in Soviet-inspired constitutions, freedom of
conscience, of religion, and of worship was assured. Freedom
was conceded to all creeds to organize and conduct their own
ecclesiastical endeavors so long as they did nothing to jeopard-
ize "public security and public order." The last proviso was,
as always, the Trojan horse by means of which the conquerors
would enter the citadel. For what were public security and
order? The government reserved the right to determine; and in
this case the "government" was and could only be the local
soviet under which a poor cleric was to live and move and have
his being. As a matter of fact, the system under which the Ru-
manian Communist Party functioned was simplicity itself. The
list of electors registered in 1946 was kept up to date by strik-
ing off the names of all who had in some manner or other mani-
fested hostility to the "people." The possessor of a name thus
purged might retain the right to worship wherever he pleased,
but was of course deprived of any opportunity to draw a salary
from the State or to hold a position of public trust.

671 Indeed, the law went much further. Article 25 provided that
793 the Ministry of Religious Affairs shall suspend any decision, instruc-
659 tion, or directive, as well as any order having an ecclesiastical charac-
ter, whether administrative, cultural, educational, or caritative, or per-
taining to endowments, if it is not in keeping with the status of the
denomination in the act by which it has been established, or is inimical
to public security, public order or morals. Pastoral and circular letters

SOVIETIZING THE BALKAN REGION

235

shall be communicated in advance of publication to the Ministry of Religious Affairs. ⁶⁷¹
793 ●
659

While thus making apparent that the Church was deprived of all liberty of action in areas of moral judgment concerning actions taken by the public authority, the law further stipulated that the salaries of "clergymen and officers of the religious denominations" would be paid in accordance with the regulations governing the civil service. In this fashion it was determined that all clergymen, on the one hand, had the rights accorded to the civil service but, on the other, assumed corresponding obligations—among them an oath of allegiance to the national Constitution.

Subsequently, on August 12, 1950, a decree dealing with the [687] security of the State imposed the death penalty for the following offenses: treason to the nation; rendering "service to the enemy, or causing prejudice to the power of the state"; and procuring or transmitting state secrets to a foreign or an enemy power. The decree was directed primarily against the dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church, because they were in communion with Rome. On July 6, 1950, another decree had provided a basis for expelling from Rumania the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop O'Hara, and his two assistants, Monsignor Kirk and Monsignor Del Mesti. Most of the Rumanian members of the Nuncio's staff were sentenced to imprisonment. Therewith an initial climax was reached in two years of fierce attack on the Churches and on the Roman Catholic Church in particular.

At this point a more detailed review of the religious situation in Rumania may help to clarify what has happened. Prior ⁷⁹⁵
to the outbreak of the Second World War, the 70 per cent of Rumanians adhering to the Orthodox Church were affiliated with the Patriarchate of Constantinople but enjoyed ecclesiastical autonomy. This Church, directed by a Holy Synod pre-
162

SOVIETIZING THE BALKAN REGION

237

means abject or corrupt; but the tradition of ecclesiastical elections to which it subscribed provided the Communists with a golden opportunity of which they took full advantage. 659
795

To make clear the situation in which the clergy of the Orthodox Church have found themselves, a report by an eyewitness who has escaped from Rumania may be cited. On October 30, 1950, the clergy met in conference. A huge portrait of Dimitrov adorned the assembly room. No symbol of religion was anywhere to be seen. The Minister of Culture spoke concerning the relations between Church and State. He attacked the spirit of opposition which, he contended, still flourished in some sections of the clergy. A priest, he said, had reported that obedience to Georgi Dimitrov was out of the question because he might very well command that the cross be removed from the tower of the cathedral in order to make room for the half-moon. Thereupon the assembled clergymen were called upon to give a rousing cheer for Dimitrov. Later, the question rose whether the editor of the principal Church journal should be elected or appointed. Some one objected that if election were abandoned the editor might conceivably prove to be a man wholly without faith. When the matter was put to a vote only twenty clergymen expressed a preference for appointment. Nevertheless the chairman announced that a substantial majority favored this method. One priest arose and said, "It is obvious that dictatorial methods are being employed here." No one else ventured to interpose an objection. 659
733 ●

Having taken the Orthodox Church in tow in this manner, the Communists began to bring pressure on Catholics professing the Greek rite to secede from the Holy See and to embrace Orthodoxy. Short shrift, indeed, was made of sundry legal scruples. The heavy hand of suppression was felt almost immediately: Bishops were arrested and sent to labor camps. A 659
793
798

653
● 733
798 decree of December 2, 1948, stated tersely and bluntly: "Subsequent to the reverting of the Greek Catholic parishes to the Rumanian Orthodox Church, and in conformity with Article 13 of Decree 177/1948, its central organization . . . shall cease to exist." All properties belonging to this Church were transferred either to the State or to the Orthodox Synod. The subsequent martyrdom of the Greek clergy rivaled the witnessing of early Christian days. All the bishops were arrested for deportation, and two, Monsignor Vasile Aftenie and Monsignor Valeriu Frentiu, are known to have died in prison. Courageous members of the lower clergy are reported to have gone into hiding in order to minister secretly to the faithful. According to persons who fled the country, such priests were hunted down as ruthlessly as the clergy of southern France in the days of Danton and Robespierre.

659
798 Therewith the time had also come to attempt the liquidation of Catholics who worshiped according to the Latin rite. Their Church was the only one which had not expressed complete satisfaction with the state of religious freedom in Rumania on June 24, 1949. The first important and ominous debate between the government and the Catholic Bishops had begun in the summer of 1948, when they stated in answer to an inquiry that it would not be possible for them to repudiate the Primacy of the Holy See. The Minister of Culture replied that he entertained no objection to an understanding with Rome on dogma, although such discussions were necessarily subject to the scrutiny of the Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs, but that any other kind of dependence on the Papacy was illegal. When the Hierarchy failed to concur, the government launched against it a press campaign of the greatest vehemence, which made it very evident that the goal set was the absorption into a "National Church" of Catholics who worshiped according to the Latin rite. Such a goal has always been envisaged whenever

SOVIETIZING THE BALKAN REGION

239

Communists gained control of a satellite country; but in Rumania it could be attained with relative ease. ⁶⁵⁹
798

The first blow was struck in July, 1948, when the Concordat ^[648] with the Holy See was revoked. Other decrees subordinating the Church to the State were passed soon thereafter. The Catholic Bishops manifested heroic valor and steadfastness. When their schools were expropriated, their caritative enterprises forbidden, their press closed down, and their religious orders suppressed, they protested. It did not seem meet and just to them that children should be prevented from coming to church, faithful men and women carted off to labor camps on trumped-up charges, or that loud-speakers should blare from one end of the day to the other accusatory comments which were in essence monstrous blasphemies. Our time has grown accustomed to thinking that only patriotic feeling, only the sense of solidarity with the nation to which we belong, can engender the resolution to make every sacrifice that becomes necessary. Therefore the spectacle of a few elderly men who accept every scourge of tyranny with patience because the Lord Jesus has willed that they do so has for us a quality which transcends fortitude—a quality which is the ultimate secret aura of what men for thousands of years have called freedom of conscience. This freedom, perhaps more than any other, is the counterpart of obedience—*usque ad mortem*, even to the death, as the Catholic liturgy says over and over.

Here is just one quotation, from a letter addressed by the ⁶⁵⁹
Bishops to the President of the People's Republic: 793 ●

We believe, Your Excellency, that the moment has come when we should no longer keep silence by reason of patriotic considerations, but should rather give expression to our sorrow. The measures which have been taken by the Government are extremely injurious to the welfare of the citizens of the Rumanian People's Republic. Nor should we abstain from making an emphatic protest against what has taken place

659 in so far as the Catholic Church in Rumania is concerned. We must
793 rather manifest our profound indignation. Millions of citizens have been deliberately wounded in the innermost core of their human feeling by the very authority to which there has been entrusted, in the presence of the nation and of the whole world, the defense of the interests of the people. Internecine strife is being fostered, the country is in tears over rampant injustice, and a wound gapes which cannot be healed over except by doing away with laws and measures which have struck and are now striking at the Catholic Church in the Rumanian People's Republic.

[687] All the Bishops who signed this and similar fruitless appeals have since been sentenced. The initial blow was struck at all dioceses save those of Alba Iulia and Iasi. In June, 1949, the Bishops of these sees also were arrested on charges of high treason. There remained only Bishop Augustin Pacha, more than eighty years old, who in turn was found guilty and sentenced to forced labor. Some of the prelates are said to have been deported to Russia; and of the whereabouts of nearly all of them nothing definite is known. Thus the Roman Catholic Church was stripped of leadership, the government recognizing only the Vicars-general of two dioceses in Transylvania. These likewise refused to conform with Communist directives. Thereupon a ruthless assault on the lower clergy was inaugurated. On the basis of reports received by the Vatican, it is estimated that at least six hundred priests and religious have been arrested, tried, and sentenced. Thus there was made manifest exemplary and moving fidelity.

793 That some would prove less steadfast was to be anticipated,
659 and in due time the government found a man willing to be the
795 leader of a "National Church"—Andreas Agotha, an unfortunate priest whom the Holy See promptly excommunicated. Under him a congress was convened at Targul-Mures, on April 27, 1950, which created the "National Catholic Church,"

SOVIETIZING THE BALKAN REGION

241

urged the clergy to support the Stockholm Peace Resolution, 733 and endorsed the formation of a "Catholic Committee of Action" to support the policies of the "People's Republic." The 795 participants were few, and one of the Vicars-general still in office ordered the clergy of the diocese of Iasi to read a declaration denouncing the congress. He was promptly arrested and has died in prison. A second congress convened at Gherghani five months later, after an appeal by Agotha to all "peace-loving" priests and faithful. Months of open persecution and of [798] strenuous pro-government campaigning followed. Under the protection of the government, the "Rumanian National Catholic Church" convened at Cluj on March 14, 1951, and took over the administration of all Roman Catholic establishments. Some 225 clerical and lay delegates attended and set up a "Council" of 27 members which declared its readiness to cooperate with the government in every manner desired. Delegates who approved of this capitulation received salaries and other benefits. Those who resisted were hounded down and imprisoned.

Meanwhile, under a decree of August 1, 1949, action was 732 taken against religious orders and communities. Five convents 659 and monasteries were designated as the places in which all monks and nuns doing educational or welfare work should live in accordance with rules laid down by the Minister of Culture. Once there were as many as 1,800 nuns in Rumania. Virtually all have returned to their families or are active as isolated parish workers. The majority of the monks are in prison. It is 798 safe to say that by the close of 1950 the Roman Catholic Church 659 was a flock dispersed, without shepherds, harried by the secret police and exposed to the constant threat of enslavement in forced-labor camps. Sometimes the actions taken against the surviving faithful have a flavor which is not only bitter but melodramatic and grimly ludicrous. Thus a priest was sentenced to a prison term for referring in a sermon to the destruc-

242 RELIGION BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

798 tion of Jerusalem by the Emperor Titus—which was deemed
659 to be a cryptic reference to Marshal Tito. More generally every
device of propaganda and repression is used to curtail the influence of religion. Popular religious festivals are forbidden, electric power failures interfere with the work of well frequented parishes, and frequenting the Sacraments makes a man subject to investigation.

659 The chronicle of the Church which worships according to
738 the Greek rite is quite as harrowing. On October 1, 1948, the
733 government announced that the 1,500,000 persons loyal to this Church had been summarily turned over to Orthodoxy. This action followed a campaign of vilification and suppression rare even in the annals of Communism. It is described in part in a letter signed jointly by the Greek Catholic Bishops at the time:

During this campaign [i.e., during the week following September 26, 1948] Iuliu Hossu, Bishop of Cluj, was confined to his residence, so that he could not communicate with the Uniate clergy or in any way protest against the actions to which our Church was subjected. In Cluj all priests and layfolk who ventured to disregard the measures taken against the Bishop, and who came to call on him, were arrested. In like manner all those who witnessed his arrest were taken into custody. Moreover Bishop Suciuc of Blaj was arrested by the Security Police just as he was leaving the Church at Copacel, which he had just consecrated. He was taken to an unknown destination and kept in a cave during two days, so that he could be prevented from getting in touch with the clergy and the faithful. . . .

We think that prudence suggests that we do not at this time enumerate all the abuses and acts of violence of which the clergy, the priests and archpriests, have been made the victims in an endeavor to obtain their signatures. They were warned and threatened, as Bishop Suciuc also was, to remain silent concerning everything that had happened.

These appeals were naturally of no avail. The government prepared to convene a "Congress" at Cluj which would ratify

SOVIETIZING THE BALKAN REGION

243

union with the Orthodox establishment. The meeting was held on October 1, 1948, and the thirty-eight canons, prelates, and priests who had been "elected" to represent the Church did as they were ordered to do. The government press reported that they had approved "unanimously and with great enthusiasm" union with the Orthodox Church and "the definitive severance of ties with Papal Rome." On December 2, 1948, still another decree transferred all the property of the Uniate Church to the Rumanian State without compensation. Much of it was subsequently turned over to the Orthodox Church. All the Bishops have been jailed or have disappeared. It is known that two, Vasile Aftenie and Valeriu Frentiu, have died in prison. The Pastoral Letter signed by the Episcopacy on June 29, 1948 (The Feast of Saints Peter and Paul), is surely one of the most touching and spiritually stirring of the documents which chronicle the persecution of the Church by the Communists. After summarizing the reasons why the Uniates had acknowledged the supremacy of the See of Peter, recalling the sufferings which had been borne by past generations for the sake of unity with Rome, and dealing with the present controversies, the Letter said:

We must suffer for the Gospels of our Redemption in order to possess the merit of having for our part met the test, just as our fathers did as, looking upon the Rood of the Lord, they heard in their hearts these words: *Dico enim vobis: Omnis quicumque confessus fuerit me coram hominibus, et Filius hominis confitebitur illum coram angelis Dei; Qui autem negaverit me coram hominibus, negabitur coram angelis Dei.**

The ties which bind us to the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, are not of human making but are of Divine origin; and it is our duty to bear

* The passage cited is from the twelfth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke and reads in translation: "And I say to you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. But he that shall deny me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God."

244 RELIGION BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

659 by reason of them outrage and blows and threats and imprisonment
738 and, it may be, destitution. These things truly mean glorifying the Lord
●733 Jesus. They will prove that we desire to insure for ourselves, even in
this day of passing suffering, an eternal meed of renown which will
be beyond weight or measure.

[697] The men who signed this Letter all have witnessed to the
466 faith they thus professed. And in their company stand devoid
of eloquence but not of holiness and fidelity, the many, many
thousands, chosen from amidst the humble and the poor, who
have suffered persecution and enslavement in Vhalitza or in
the region between the Danube and the Black Sea. In order
that we may understand their ordeal, let me quote from eye-
witness accounts of the camps built to house those who toil at
digging a canal in the Dobrouja:

Approximately 30,000 prisoners are stationed there. The majority
of them are intellectuals. They are digging a canal between the Danube
and the Black Sea, or are building roads, bridges, and so forth. Prac-
tically all the work is done by hand in the same manner and with the
same methods as those which were employed for the erection of the
Egyptian pyramids. The food is very poor. As a rule, the daily menu
consists of corn meal with a soup made of onions or beans. The sani-
tary conditions are indescribable, and for this reason the death toll is
extremely high. Prisoners work more than twelve hours a day. Some
of them were sentenced by the courts. Others were not. But this makes
no difference, for even those who did receive sentences are not released
when their terms are over.

000 The Uniate Churches are not among the great religious bodies
of the world. But we might well pause in reverence while pass-
ing their temples of worship to commemorate those who in far-
off countries have so nobly and sacrificially clung to their faith.
Such a tribute would by no means preclude one from bearing
in mind that others, too, have felt the crushing weight of Ru-